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ABSTRACT

On the first of November, 1967 a Schools Council research and development project in Compensatory Education which will last for three-and-one-half years, was set up in the Department of Education of the University College of Swansea, Wales. The main aims of the project were: to provide screening techniques to enable children in need of compensatory education to be identified at an early age; to make longitudinal studies of infant school children in deprived areas, with particular reference to their emotional development and response to schooling; and, to develop teaching programs involving materials in a variety of media, which may be used to help culturally deprived children at the infant school age. The project was concerned with children in the four to eight years' age range, and the research team was to work in several areas of England and Wales. Teacher groups and permanent displays of materials were to be organized. (Author/JM)

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Project in Compensatory Education

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Introduction

Schools Council Project in Compensatory Education

On 1st November, 1967, a Schools Council research and development project in Compensatory Education which will last for three-and-a-half years, was set up in the Department of Education of the University College of Swansea. Mr. Maurice Chazan and Dr. Phillip Williams are co-directors of the project.

The main aims of the project are:

(1) to provide screening techniques to enable children in need of compensatory education to be identified at an early age;

(2) to make longitudinal studies of infant school children in deprived areas, with particular reference to their emotional development and response to schooling;

(3) to develop teaching programmes, involving materials in a variety of media, which may be used to help culturally deprived children at the infant school stage.

The project is concerned with children in the four to eight years' age range, and the research team will work in several areas of England and Wales. Teachers' groups and permanent displays of materials will be organized.

The research team has been organized in the following units:

(1) *Identification Techniques Unit*
Dr. Phillip Williams (Department of Education)
Senior Research Officer (Mr. Ray Evans)
Research Assistants (Mr. Neil Ferguson and Mrs. Pat Davies)

(2) *Units for Study of Emotional Development and Response to Schooling*
Mr. Maurice Chazan and Miss Alice Laing (Department of Education)
Senior Research Officer (Mr. T. Cox)
Research Officer (Mr. Aneurin Williams)
Social Worker (Miss Susan Jackson)

(3) *Welsh Language Unit*
Consultants: members of the Schools Council Attitudes to Language Project
Research Officer (Mr. Aneurin Williams)

(4) *Programme Development Unit*
Senior Research Officer (to be appointed)
Graphic Designer (to be appointed)

Mr. R. E. George (Department of Education) is Secretary to the project, the total cost of which is £66,000.

The research team will be issuing a series of bulletins describing the project and giving progress reports. In this field report the aims and design of the research and development programme are explained.

Charles Gittins
Professor of Education,
University College of Swansea

1. Identification Techniques Unit

Purpose of the Unit

The identification techniques unit of this project is concerned with the question, 'Who should be compensated?' Other parts of the project answer questions such as 'How should we compensate?' and 'What methods of compensation should we use?' but the identification techniques unit is concerned with the early identification of individual children needing compensation, those children who would otherwise drift downwards through the classes in the education system, ending up in the remedial groups, the special classes, or the bottom end of the lower streams in junior and secondary schools. The majority of these children are from poor homes, attending poor schools in poor areas, and it has been suggested by the Plowden and Gittins Reports that resources should be allocated to these areas, which are to be called 'educational priority areas'. This idea of allocating resources to educational priority areas is socially equitable and educationally just, but there are two points to note in this attempt to define children in need through the area in which they live.

Because a child grows up in a poor home—a social class 5 home, to use the current terminology—in a poor area with poor housing conditions and a father whose earnings may be low, if he is earning at all, it does not necessarily follow that he is a child in need of compensatory education. There are many children who come from poor homes who do well, and who have by no means drifted downwards through society. To take two extreme cases, John Bunyan's father was an itinerant tinker, while Andrew Carnegie's father was unemployed. Research has shown that the economic impoverishment of the home is not as important in affecting the way children develop educationally as the psychological and social qualities of the home and the family within which the child grows up. Work by Elizabeth Fraser, by Wiseman and many others, work which was illustrated by Volume II of the Plowden Report, shows very clearly that it is these qualities of parental interest, parental encouragement, stability in the relationships in the home, which matter in determining the way a child responds to school. The economic conditions of the home, the amount of money that the father brings into the household, the area in which the child grows up, are not as important as the human qualities of the home itself. Many children who grow up in homes in areas which are economically impoverished enjoy these advantages of interest, encouragement, affection and stability. Of course, in areas which are economically impoverished there is certainly likely to be a higher concentration of children whose response to school is going to be poor, and who are going to need assistance, but this is not the same thing as saying that the area as a whole needs special help and attention. This is not so. If resources were to be allocated to an educational priority area, it might be that the instrument used would be a little too blunt for its purpose.

The second point is almost the converse of the first. It relates to the effect of the 'educational priority area' concept on the children who live outside the area, but who may be equally in need of some assistance. There are many children who are growing up in families in the suburbs, with parents in the middle classes, who are as much in need of some form of help and assistance as are the children who grow up in these poorer areas with which the educational priority concept is associated. By insisting that resources go to educational priority areas, we create a situation in which border lines are drawn, leading to a number of inequities. When Cyril Burt, 50 years ago, in his classic work with the London County Council, drew his maps of the old L.C.C. and put in the flags to show where he had identified slow-learning children in need of special class work, he found, as might be expected, that Hoxton was an area where the flags were thick, and Hampstead was an area where flags were few and far between. But special classes are not available to Hoxton children only. The same point applies to areas nearer the present project's base. When remedial teaching services were being established by a local education authority in South Wales it was fairly clear that the children in the decaying communities in the valleys and the valley heads were much more in need of remedial services than the children along the economically better off coastal plain, but it was never suggested that remedial services should be available only to those children living in the valley communities. This would have been unfair as far as the children in other parts of the county were concerned. Special help should be

determined by the needs of the individual child, not by a geographical boundary: in short, a sharper instrument than the 'educational priority area' is needed.

It could be argued that educational priority schools are needed. This also may be so, but why stop at schools? Why not talk of educational priority families or, better still, educational priority children? Compensating individuals rather than compensating schools, families or areas represents a sharpening of the educational priority area concept, a refining of the concept, and a means whereby it might be made more effective. This is what the identification techniques unit is about; its purpose is to devise techniques which enable this refinement to take place, and to design simple assessment schedules for use in schools.

The research design

The unit will work with five-year-olds in their first year in school, attempting to identify those whose response to school will have deteriorated by the time they are eight years of age. Five was chosen since this is the age at which all children in our educational system usually enter infants' school. Research does, of course, show that the earlier one can intervene in development the more effective that intervention is likely to be. Whether it would ever be practicable in this country, with our limited resources, to adopt policies which would enable us to work on an individual basis with pre-school children in their homes is doubtful at the moment. So five seems a reasonable age on practical grounds.

The enquiry is being conducted with the co-operation of one Welsh local education authority, in Glamorgan, and one English local education authority. The investigation will work with some 700 children, the total intake during the school year 1968–69 of 12 infants' schools which have been nominated as possessing certain characteristics. The children will be studied over a three-year period, until they are eight years of age, the time by which it can be established by conventional methods whether children are in need of educational assistance. Very roughly, eight, the age by which children have entered junior schools, is the age at which children in most of our education authorities are being brought forward, or should be being brought forward, for remedial education, for special class work, and for special assistance of all kinds. It would have been valuable to have extended this upper limit of the investigation beyond eight, and to have attempted to predict how children were developing at nine, ten or older, and this is something which might be done at a later stage.

The data

It is important to be clear over the data which should enable children needing compensation at eight to be identified at five. It is intended to collect information in four main areas. First, information will be collected about home background qualities, those qualities which previous research has found to be important, and to have high associations with childrens' school progress. Second, we shall seek information about the children's intellectual, linguistic and emotional development. Third will be information about the child's medical condition, which it is hoped will be based on a medical examination conducted by the School Health Service. Fourth, it is hoped to collect teachers' opinions about the children, their education and their approach to educating children in the infants' school.

This fairly comprehensive information can be used not only to predict which children would deteriorate because of the lack of interest and lack of encouragement in the home, but also those children whose deterioration and whose presence later in the special classes and remedial groups is due to other conditions, either separable from or allied to deprivation conditions. For example, genetic factors play a very large part in child development. It may be that the poorly endowed child can be identified at five. We hope that out of our information there may emerge some constellations or clusters of classifications leading to the identification of several different groups of children. It may be that this information about different forms of deprivation will help to identify clusters or little groups of children—in some cases quite large groups of children—who will need some corresponding form of special help in school.

At present the unit has started piloting the schedules to be used with the help and co-operation of

infant schools in the Glamorgan Local Education Authority. Development work is still proceeding and the progress of the work will be reported in project bulletins.

2. Units for Study of Emotional Development and Response to Schooling

Because of the overlap between these two units in aims, research design and research personnel, it is convenient to present a combined report of their position in the research project as a whole. The main aims of the units can be stated briefly as follows:

(1) to examine the effects of material and cultural deprivation on the educational, social and emotional development of infant school children;

(2) to study the problems facing the schools serving children from deprived backgrounds and to compare these problems with those found in schools serving children from more favourable backgrounds;

(3) to co-operate in the development of compensatory and guidance programmes (and materials) based on the information gained from the above studies and from work with teachers' groups.

The work of the two units spans three-and-a-half years and can be divided into four stages in the following sequence:

(1) a study of children prior to their entry to school;

(2) a general study of the children and schools involved in the research;

(3) an intensive study of selected children;

(4) work on the compilation of suitable compensatory material in conjunction with the Programme Development Unit.

Before looking at these four stages in rather greater detail, it is necessary to indicate the composition of the sample of the infant school population on which the research will be based. Instead of confining the investigation to the obviously deprived areas of inner urban decay, the sample has been selected on the basis of a rather wider interpretation of deprivation. The inner city area schools, therefore, will be studied along with schools serving council housing estates and remote rural areas. In each of three urban areas, the following types of school will be selected:

(1) four schools serving children from predominantly 'deprived' backgrounds;

(2) two schools serving children from predominantly 'settled working-class' backgrounds;

(3) two schools serving children from predominantly 'middle-class' backgrounds.

In the one rural area to be studied, 12 schools will be drawn as representative of the county.

In all areas the complete infant school entry in September 1968 of children born between 1st September, 1963, and 31st March, 1964, will be studied. The children from the 'non-deprived' (i.e. settled working-class and middle-class) backgrounds will serve as controls to the 'deprived' groups so that the problems associated with material and cultural deprivation may be highlighted.

Stage 1: A study of children prior to their entry to school

The aim of this stage of the research is not to examine exhaustively the development of children in their pre-school years, but rather to investigate two aspects of this development which are of particular importance in adjustment to school, namely, the nature and incidence of behaviour problems displayed before school entry by a proportion of the children from the main sample, and the extent

to which these children have been prepared for school through their play and environmental experiences.

About 120 families in one of the research areas will be visited twice and information based on structured questionnaires will be gathered and analysed. The children concerned will be going in September 1968 to three of the 'deprived' area schools and three of the 'non-deprived' area schools and the information acquired should be of particular interest when considered along with that obtained after their entry to school.

Stage 2: General study of the children and the schools in the research sample

This stage will begin in September 1968 in all 36 schools. The aims are to study how the sample schools promote the educational, emotional and social adjustment of the children and how the children themselves are progressing at specific stages in their infant school careers. The incidence of difficulties in social and emotional adjustment will be noted and the schools' methods of coping with these will be discussed. The educational setting in which the child is developing will be examined by investigating the amenities and environment of the schools as well as their aims, organisation and staffing. Because the sample is representative of schools serving 'deprived' areas and 'non-deprived' areas it should be possible to gain more precise information than is at the moment available on the general effect of deprivation on children's adjustment in the early years at school and on the extent to which this effect is cumulative.

No changes in methods or organisation are proposed in the sample schools. The intention is to chronicle what is actually happening at present and to disrupt the work of the schools as little as possible.

Stage 3: Intensive study of selected children

Two sub-samples of children in 'deprived area' schools will be studied intensively:

(1) In order to study the effects of material and cultural deprivation on particular aspects of children's development, two groups of children will be selected, matched for age, sex, school class and non-verbal intelligence but differing in respect of the degree of deprivation suffered at home. The sub-sample will consist of 120 children drawn from the urban areas of deprivation. The aspects of development to be compared will include:

   (*a*) language development;

   (*b*) school drive (i.e. motivation and attitude to learning, attention and concentration);

   (*c*) emotional and social development.

   The children will be seen individually at intervals throughout their infant school career and their home background will also be looked at in some detail.

(2) The children who, in their teacher's estimate, present the greatest problems of emotional and social adjustment at the end of their first year in school will be followed up for the next two years. They will be matched with a control group who show no such problems in school. The main aims of this part of the enquiry will be to ascertain the extent of the problems, the persistence of the problems and the nature of the help and guidance required by the children and their families. Again, we shall be concerned only with the children in schools serving 'deprived' areas.

By means of these two intensive studies, the particular aspects of cognitive development and school adjustment most affected by material and cultural deprivation should be delineated and compensatory measures can then be proposed.

Stage 4: Compilation of suitable compensatory material

The surveys and studies which have been discussed above are also intended to suggest compensatory and guidance programmes which will be of use in the schools. In the production of these materials,

the units will work closely with the Programme Development Unit and with the teachers' groups which it is hoped will be formed in each of the project areas. Practical suggestions from practising teachers and the research team members will be developed and introduced experimentally on a small scale into schools other than the project schools.

By the end of the project, therefore, not only should the effects of social disadvantage on young children's adjustment be more precisely understood but possible means of remedying these effects should also have been developed.

3. Welsh Language Unit

The main aims of the Welsh Language Unit are:

(1) to study the effects of deprivation upon the linguistic development of Welsh-speaking infant school children;

(2) to produce materials for use in compensatory programmes in Welsh-language infants' schools.

The Unit will be concerned with two 'matched' groups of children whose first language is Welsh—one group being from a 'deprived' background, and the other from a 'non-deprived' background. The degree of deprivation will be measured by means of a 'Social Disadvantage Index' to be circulated to the schools involved in the experiment, and completed by the head teachers in respect of each individual child nominated. Nominations will take place according to the following criteria:

(1) dates of birth falling between 1st September, 1963, and 31st March, 1964;

(2) both parents Welsh-speaking;

(3) preferred language of the child outside the classroom is Welsh.

The sample will be chosen from schools in predominantly Welsh-speaking areas of South Wales.

Children having a high score on the index will be selected as the 'deprived' group, and these will be 'matched' with 'non-deprived' children, i.e. those having a low score on the index with respect to age, length of schooling, school class, sex, non-verbal intelligence and Welsh linguistic background.

Levels of attainment and rates of development in English and in Welsh will be compared between the two groups of children initially and over the period of their infant school careers. The following aspects will be studied:

(1) language developments;

(2) reading:

(*a*) reading readiness;

(*b*) reading attainment;

(3) general educational progress and adjustment.

The educational background of the two groups of children will also be investigated with respect to:

(1) size of schools and facilities offered;

(2) training, experience and turnover of staff;

(3) aims, methods and difficulties of teachers.

The Unit has now established contact with local education authorities in the sample areas, and lists of likely schools are being prepared. Work is also going forward with the preparation of the 'Social Disadvantage Index' for use in the schools by the head teachers.

4. Programme Development Unit

The development of programmes and materials is the responsibility of the Programme Development Unit which has two main functions, firstly to visualize and realize suggestions arising from the work of the Units for the Study Emotional Development and Response to Schooling and also from teachers' groups associated with the Project, and secondly to initiate lines of development arising from its study of programmes and materials currently in use.

Disadvantaged children are handicapped in the sense that their background has not offered them those experiences that are part of the culture of children to whose needs most of our schools are geared. The common feature of compensatory programmes is their duality of aim for they are both remedial and preventive. They are remedial inasmuch as they fill gaps—social, cultural, and academic—in the children's experience and preventive because by filling the gaps they try to avoid failure in school.

Most compensatory programmes have a strong emphasis on aural and visual discrimination and on language development and offer plentiful practice in listening, looking and speaking. Stimuli provided by the modern media—slides, tapes, films, filmstrips, television, etc.—are used to improve the quantity and quality of children's speech production, and it is clear that in order to offer effective compensation the schools must exploit these new media. The technology of communication is changing so rapidly and dramatically that the media-orientation of the school has to become less closely bound to the written and printed word. Unfortunately, however, the training and the whole professional investment of the teacher has traditionally been in the linear, print-based media, and it is therefore singularly difficult for her to revalue the written word in the context of the other powerful and pervasive media which make up the galaxy of contemporary communications.

The significance of the new media for compensatory education is that they can reinforce, complement and sometimes replace the printed word by the sound, the image and the multi-sensory experience, offering a variety of approaches to the basic problem of communication.

In the limited space available we can only describe very briefly three such approaches—one aural, a second visual, and a third audio visual—which seem to hold out some interesting possibilities for use in compensatory programmes.

Pictures in sound [1]

These are a series of tapes which use the power of sound to liberate the listener's creative imagination. Each sequence of sound effects suggests a story and, although in practice the listeners' oral responses will be broadly similar, there are no 'right' answers. The tapes are meant to induce speech in the inarticulate and, of course, they have the great virtue of communicating with the pupil, irrespective of his ability to read. They also engage the pupil's interest and concentration particularly when they are used with a simple tape player (no possibility of erasure) and individual earphones. Sound reproduction equipment is comparatively cheap and ubiquitous and since many young children can handle such equipment with confidence the potential of tape as a teaching medium is obviously quite considerable.

Visual experiences for creative growth [2]

These consist of a series of blown-up photographs aimed at developing perceptual and motor skills and relating social-emotional concepts, the ideas and the research behind the materials being very

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[1] A wide range of tape materials available from:
The Remedial Supply Co., Dixon Street, Wolverhampton.

[2] A series published in the U.S.A. by:
The Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., Columbus, Ohio.

relevant to basic compensatory aims. For all the photographs encourage activities such as visual/oral transfer, oral language extension and general language activities. The study print provides the visual image while the teacher's questions stimulate the pupil to expand his perception and to articulate concepts relating to the visual image. Since this activity is conducted through questioning rather than telling, the visual/oral transfer is accomplished by the pupil for himself.

'Talking books' [3]

These consist of an audio-visual treatment of children's picture books whereby the illustrations are produced commercially in the form of a colour filmstrip and the story is recorded on an accompanying tape. The teacher presents the 'talking books' by projecting the filmstrip in synchronization with the story.

This form of presentation has certain advantages over the traditional story-telling lesson in the infants' school. Firstly, the economics of publishing make it very expensive to produce a book where all the illustrations are in full colour, most children's picture books having an equal number of illustrations in black and white and in colour. In these filmstrips, however, every frame is in colour and the large size and luminous quality of the projected image are powerful aids to concentration.

Secondly, the quality of the reading can be very good if, for instance, an experienced actor records the story.

Thirdly, if the story is recorded by a male reader the sound of his voice in itself can be a form of compensation in the female-dominated infants' school.

These 'talking books' can, of course, be used as stimuli for language development and creative activity but they are also aesthetic and emotional experiences in their own right.

The Programme Development Unit will continue to experiment with and adapt commercially-produced materials, but is also commissioning original work to be used in selected schools (none of which will be in the project samples) in controlled experiments. By the end of the project, therefore, the Unit will have 'piloted' numerous materials in a variety of media and the possibilities of developing some of these on a larger scale will then be considered.

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[3] Filmstrips only (no tapes) entitled 'Picture Book Parade' available from:
Children's Book Centre Ltd., 140 Kensington Church Street, London, W.8.

SCHOOLS COUNCIL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

The project will be producing a series of bulletins at regular intervals. If you would like to receive free copies of these as they appear, as well as information concerning other occasional publications, please complete and return the form below.

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